

**Final As Amended - Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary – January 20, 2010
Mid-County Regional Services – 2424 Reddie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902**

Members Present, Mara Baer; Gregory Baker; Elizabeth Boyle; Melissa Brown; Eleanor Duckett; Jonathan Fink; Sabrina Goris; Rahman Harrison; Manuel Hidalgo; Zoe Lefkowitz; Chris Lindsay, Diane Lynne; Thomas Martin; Susan Petersen; Erin Roberts; Morey Rothberg, Dave Taghipour and Fran Ware

Members Absent: Maureen Carrington; Filippo Leo; and Robert Schilke

County Staff Present: Gary Stith; Rob Klein; Pete McGinnity; Sharon Lasswell; Natalie Cantor and, Joseph Eyong for Councilmember Ervin

Guest Speakers: Alex Chen and Beth Chaisson

Guests: Leigh & Cecilia Pisner

Meeting Called to Order by Chairperson Greg Baker at 7:04 p.m.

Approval of Minutes – Motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Lindsay and seconded by Ms. Ware. December minutes were unanimously approved.

University of MD Greening Wheaton Presentation by – Dr. Chen

This graduate level course addresses problems identified by a client. Students have 13 weeks to do their research, write a report and conduct an oral presentation. Their topic was the “Greening of Wheaton” focusing on the Wheaton Triangle area. Students examined green business strategies to determine their possible implications for restaurants, the larger community and a site design for a potential redevelopment project. In addition to researching green business strategies that restaurants could adopt, the studio through surveys, interviews, and a focus group investigated issues relating to restaurants adopting green business practices. Their investigation included operating strategies, the financial benefits of a green building and the cost benefit analysis. To review their report, go to:

http://www.arch.umd.edu/student_work/app.cfm?id=881

Next Steps – The University of MD is looking for the Green Wheaton Sustainable Initiatives Work Group to implement the recommendations. They are asking that the County keep their recommendations in mind as redevelopment proceeds.

Green Wheaton Sustainable Initiative Work Group – by Ms. Chaisson

- The Work Group read the University of MD report and recommended the following strategies for “green” Wheaton restaurants:
 - Possible Partners in the Area – LEDC; Chamber of Commerce Green Business Resource Center; Department of Economic Development; Green Economy Task Force; Department of Environmental Protection Green Business Certification; Brookside Gardens; Alice Ferguson Foundation; and Friends of Sligo Creek.

- Recommended Strategies – Develop “Going Green” public education and outreach brochures and a “Green” webpage with green tips as well as links to green businesses, workshops, products, etc.; Develop “Customer Service and Green Business Training” for Wheaton restaurants to improve staff training as well as the environment; Develop a grant funded “green interior” renovation program (similar to past façade renovation programs); Promote DEP Green Business Certification among Wheaton businesses (have a special sticker for storefront windows); and Develop workshops and events at the Farmer’s Market on Sunday Mornings.
- Possible Green Wheaton Tasks – Develop Stakeholder lists, Partners and Community Contacts; attend local community civic meetings, conduct PowerPoint presentations on how to “Go Green” in Wheaton, and promote having a “Green” Steward liaison for each group; Develop PowerPoint presentations based on existing DEP programs; Partner with MD Native Plants, Brookside Gardens, etc. to develop PowerPoint on Native Plants; Partner with Red Wiggler Community Farm and Montgomery County CSAs to develop a PowerPoint on local food; Partner with Amicus Green Building Center and All Eco Center to develop a PowerPoint on green interior building materials; and Partner with NWF and the Wild Bird Center to develop a PowerPoint on gardening for wildlife.

Costco Discussion – lead by Mr. Stith

- Costco is an Economic Development Project that will provide jobs and viability to the mall;
- It’s not a Wheaton Redevelopment Project – not a substitute for what the County intends to have happen in Wheaton;
- The Economic Development Fund is “project specific” for private enterprise and not used for government intervention;
- Initially, Westfield met with the County Council and the County Executive to discuss the possibility of Costco coming to Westfield;
- Both Council and Executive reached out to Mr. Hidalgo from LEDC for an opinion; LEDC represents the businesses, so Mr. Hidalgo initiated a meeting on January 15th for the business owners to discuss this issue – Councilmember Ervin’s Office was represented, and Mr. Silverman and other County staff attended as well; it was learned that 12,000 of the 13,000 Wheaton businesses have a Costco membership; there were community concerns about how this information was released to the public; the amount of the County subsidy (\$4 million); the need for a match of four million dollars for redevelopment of downtown Wheaton; Smart Growth issues; traffic and congestion;
- The majority of the five businesses that attended the January 15th LEDC meeting were in favor of Costco coming to the mall;
- Ms. Goris indicated the Hecht’s space has been vacant for four years and they are the second least profitable mall in the entire portfolio;
- Westfield fully intended to make a presentation to WRAC, WUDAC and the community once a lease was signed – which it has not as yet;
- If Westfield’s gets a commitment from Costco, they can put together a detailed presentation to bring to the WRAC and the community;
- Costco will coordinate with Montgomery Works to fill the new 475 positions (300 construction jobs – 275 Costco jobs – and 200 jobs between the other two retailers); \$9 million in sales tax; and another \$300,000 in property tax;

- Ms. Goris indicated Costco will not come without the gas station. Westfield is aware there is concern from the adjacent community regarding a gas station at that site – Westfield will discuss this with all the communities; a community impact study has been done in other areas before a Costco moves;
- Mr. Silverman and representatives from Westfield and Costco were not available to attend our meeting tonight, but would be happy to meet with WRAC on Monday evening, January 25th or the February meeting at 7:00 to answer any questions. There was some discussion as to the necessity of another meeting. Westfield would like to hear feedback from the WRAC. *It was agreed WRAC will meet on January 25th ;*
- The next steps in the process are: Council will take action in an open meeting (not yet scheduled); Westfield will address all the community concerns once a lease is signed; there are no Planning Board approvals needed; Westfield previously went to the Planning Board and got an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO); they can get a Special Exception or go to Council and get a Zoning Text Amendment to allow the gas station; a site plan approval is not needed as they are in a C2 Zone
- When Westfield added Macy's they received an Adequate Public Facilities Ruling that would allow them to add a specified amount of square footage - they did not use all of the square footage when Macy's was added. As a result, the previously approved square footage would now be available for Costco;
- Westfield has spoken with a number of national companies interested in coming to the mall if Costco moves forward with their plans;
- Giant Food Store at Westfield is excited about the prospect of Costco coming. Costco carries 4,000 items in their store, while Giant carries 100,000 items;
- There was a great deal of discussion as to whether WRAC should take a position on the \$4 million subsidy;
- Mr. Stith mentioned it will take far more than four million to redevelop downtown Wheaton – we need a specific project to work on and that will be done with a developer and what kind of under-writing do we need to do that;
- Joseph Eyong from Councilmember Ervin's office spoke and commented that Councilmember Ervin is very committed to the redevelopment of downtown Wheaton.
- WRAC will hold a meeting on Monday January 25th to hear from Costco, Westfield and Mr. Silverman. Councilmember Ervin will also be invited to attend.

Sector Plan Update by Mr. Klein

- M-NCPPC staff is responding to Planning Board questions from the December 4th meeting. M-NCPPC staff was asked to look, block-by-block, at density and FAR to determine what makes sense. Sector Plan is still on schedule for delivery to the County Council. The next Sector Plan Work Group meeting was February 1st. A community meeting is tentatively being planned for the end of February.

Redevelopment Report – by Mr. Stith

Mr. Stith briefed the WRAC on the contents of the RFQ:

- The RFQ was issued on January 4, 2010 and posted on the County's website; we have advertised in the Washington Business Journal; advertised in Bisnow (a web-based real estate business newsletter); advertised in the DC Building Industry Association Newsletter; as well as ULI Washington's Newsletter. It was also sent to architects, land use attorneys and developers.
- RFQ submissions are due on March 19th.
- A short list will be developed and additional information and financials will be asked for.

- An interview panel will be selected – half from WMATA and half from the County with one person selected from M-NCPPC (non-core areas will be County staff only).
- Interviews will be conducted and recommendations for a developer or developers will be given to the County Executive.
- The County will have a letter of intent with the developer and the developer will begin working with the County and the WRAC as well as the community on a development concept.
- A Pre-Submission Conference will be held on February 2 for interested developers followed by a brief tour of the properties mentioned in the RFQ.
- When looking at the RFQ on the web site, there is also various background materials listed as well.
- The WRAC Economic Development Sub-Committee expects to look at two projects at their meeting on January 28th -- Washington Property Company redeveloping the first Baptist Church of Wheaton site; and BB&T. The two projects will then go to the full WRAC Committee at the February 17th meeting.
- On February 25th, the Chairs from the Wheaton Advisory Committees will meet with the County Executive about the Operating Budget. At our February 17th meeting, we will discuss any suggestions or priorities you think the County should consider in terms of the Operating Budget.
- This year's Operating Budget is more about what you don't want cut – than what you want added. Severe cuts will be necessary.
- We can talk about what is in the Capital Budget at the February 17th WRAC meeting.

MOTION – was made by Mr. Fink and seconded by Ms. Petersen to draft a letter expressing WRAC's concerns on the budget cuts affecting Wheaton Bus Routes. Mr. Fink will draft the letter. Motion passed.

Mr. Stith advised the Council is considering a Resolution to establish a recovery zone. In the stimulus package there is a program that allows jurisdictions to issue bonds. There are two types of bonds – Public Annuity Bonds for public projects and Tax Exempt Bonds for private projects. They have to be commercial projects. The allocation to Montgomery County is \$35 million, which could be used to encourage private development projects. It's another tool that might be available to help a project in Wheaton. He asked if WRAC would be interested in supporting this.

MOTION – was made by Ms. Roberts and seconded by Mr. Hidalgo to draft a letter in support of the Council establishing a Resolution to Establish a Recovery Zone. The County will draft the letter. Motion passed.

Public Comments

- Mr. Pisner is a 30 year resident of Wheaton and is happy with Wheaton's progress and is looking forward to more action in the community. He and his wife plan to remain in Wheaton for many more years to come.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 pm